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AUTHOR	Clark, Sara H.
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ABSTRACT

Two Basic Skill Centers were set up on 1968 to help inner city students improve their reading skills. The Centers were supported mainly by the Minneapolis Public Schools although ESEA Title I funds provided teacher aides. This report covers the sixth year's operation of the project. Substantial changes in the Centers' operations are described. The goals of the project since late 1970 have been the achievement of functional literacy by disabled readers and nonreaders from grades 4 through 9 in Target Area schools and the development of an instructional program to make it possible. The newly developed Basic Skill Centers Reading Program provided all curricular materials. A multimedia approach was used which included teaching machines as well as individual instruction in related classrooms. Individualized instruction was provided for 595 Title I students from grades 4-9 from 22 public schools. The students, who came from Title I Target Area schools, made grade equivalent gains well above what would have been expected for average children working at the reading levels of the Gates-MacGinitie Comprenension tests which were the measuring instruments. From 81 percent to 90 percent of the students made grade equivalent gains greater than expected for the pre- post-test span of six to seven months. (Author/DEP)

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Minneapolis Public Schools

Basic Skill Centers of Minneapolis 1973-74

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Sara H, Clark, Title I Evaluator

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Research and Evaluation Department
Planning and Support Services

807 N.E. Broadway
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55413

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Minneapolis Public Schools

Basic Skill Centers
1973-74

Summary

See Page

Two Basic Skill Centers, one on the near North Side, the other on the South Side, were set up in 1968 to help inner city students improve their reading skills. The Centers were supported mainly by the Minneapolis Public Schools although ESEA Title I funds provided teacher aides. This report covers the sixth year's operation of the project. Substantial changes in the Centers' operations are described. 6

The goals of the project since late 1970 have been the achievement of functional literacy by disabled readers and non-readers from grades 4 through 9 in Target Area schools and the development of an instructional program to make it possible. 8

The newly developed Basic Skill Centers Reading Program provided all curricular materials. A multi-media approach was used which included teaching machines as well as individual instruction in related classrooms. 8

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The students, who came from Title I Target Area schools, made grade equivalent gains well above what would have been expected for average children working at the reading levels of the Gates-MacGinitie Comprehension tests which were the measuring instruments. From 81% to 90% of the students made grade equivalent gains greater than expected for the pre-posttest span of six to seven months. 16

Recommendations are given. 22

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November, 1974

Research and Evaluation Department

Table of Contents

	Page
City of Minneapolis	1
The Minneapolis Schools	3
The Target Area	4
Historical Background	5
Objectives	8
Project Operations	8
Personnel	9
Planning and Training	10
The Project Schools	10
Student Participants	12
Parent and Community Involvement	13
Dissemination and Communication	15
Budget	15
Student Measures	16
Results	16
Discussion	20
Recommendations	22

List of Tables

Table No.		Page
1.	Numbers of Students by Participating School and Group.....	11
2.	Distribution by Grade Level of BSC Participants..	12
3.	Reasons Students Left the Centers.....	14
4.	Grade Equivalent Gains Distribution, Gates-Mac-Ginitie, Comprehension, Level B.....	18
5.	Grade Equivalent Gains Distribution, Gates-Mac-Ginitie, Comprehension, Level C.....	19
6.	Comparison of Gains for Three Years, Gates-Mac-Ginitie, Comprehension.....	20

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About this report. . . . . .

All evaluation reports prepared by the Research and Evaluation Department of the Minneapolis Public Schools follow the procedures and format described in Preparing Evaluation Reports, A Guide for Authors, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Readers who are familiar with these Evaluation Reports may wish to skip the sections describing the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Public Schools since these descriptions are standard for all reports.

The City of Minneapolis

The program described in this report was conducted in the Minneapolis Public Schools. Minneapolis is a city of 434,400 people located on the Mississippi River in the southeastern part of Minnesota. With its somewhat smaller twin city, St. Paul, it is the center of a seven-county metropolitan area of over 1,874,000, the largest population center between Chicago and the Pacific Coast. As such it serves as the hub for the entire Upper Midwest region of the country.

The city, and its surrounding area, long has been noted for the high quality of its labor force. The unemployment rate in Minneapolis is lower than in other major cities, possibly due to the variety and density of industry in the city as well as to the high level capability of its work force. The Twin City metropolitan area unemployment rate in June of 1974 was 4.0%, compared with a 5.2% national rate for the same month. As the economic center of a prosperous region rich in such natural resources as forests, minerals, water power and productive agricultural land, Minneapolis attracts commerce and workers from throughout the Upper Midwest region. Many residents are drawn from the neighboring states of Iowa, Wisconsin, Nebraska and the Dakotas as well as from the farming areas and the Iron Range region of outstate Minnesota.

More Minneapolitans (32%) work in clerical and sales jobs than in any other occupation, reflecting the city's position as a major wholesale-retail center and a center for banking, finance and insurance. Almost as many (26%) are employed as craftsmen, foremen and operatives, and 23% of the work force are professionals, technicians, managers, and officials. One out of five workers is employed in laboring and service occupations.

Minneapolis city government is the council-dominated type. Its mayor, elected for a two year term, has limited powers. Its elected city council operates by committee and engages in administrative as well as legislative action.

Minneapolis is not a crowded city. While increasing industrial development has occupied more and more land, the city's population has declined steadily from a peak of 522,000 in 1950. The city limits have not been changed since 1927. Most homes are sturdy, single family dwellings built to withstand severe winters. Row homes are practically non-existant even in low income areas. In 1970, 48% of the housing units in Minneapolis were owner-occupied.

Most Minneapolitans are native born Americans, but about 35,000 (7%) are foreign born. Swedes, Norwegians, Germans, and Canadians comprise most of the foreign born population.

Relatively few non-white citizens live in Minneapolis although their numbers are increasing. In 1960 only three percent of the population was non-white. The 1970 census figures indicate that the non-white population had more than doubled (6.4%) in the intervening 10 years. About 70% of the non-whites are black. Most of the remaining non-white population is American Indian, mainly Chippewa and Sioux. Only a small number of residents from Spanish-surnamed or Oriental origins live in the city. In 1970 non-white residents made up 6.4% of the city's population but accounted for 15% of the children in the city's elementary schools.

Minneapolis has not reached the stage of many other large cities in terms of the level of social problems. It has been relatively untouched by racial disorders or by student unrest. Crime rates are below national averages.

One's first impression is that Minneapolis doesn't really have serious problems of blight and decay. But the signs of trouble are evident to one who looks beyond the parks and lakes and tree-lined streets. As with many other larger cities, the problems are focused in the core city and are related to increasing concentrations there of the poor, many of them non-whites, and of the elderly. For example, nine out of 10 black Americans in Minneapolis live in just one-tenth of the city's area. While Minneapolis contains 11% of the state's population, it supports 28% of the state's AFDC families.

There has been a steady migration to the city by American Indians from the reservations and by poor whites from the small towns and rural areas of Minnesota. They come to the "promised land" of Minneapolis looking for a job and a better way of life. Some make it; many do not. The American Indian population is generally confined to the same small geographic areas in which black Americans live. These same areas of the city have the lowest median incomes in the city and the highest concentrations of dilapidated housing, welfare cases, and juvenile delinquency.

The elderly also are concentrated in the central city. In 1970, 15% of the city's population was over age 65. The elderly, like the 18 to 24 year old young adults, live near the central city because of the availability of less expensive housing in multiple-unit dwellings. Younger families have continued to migrate toward the outer edges of the city and to the surrounding suburban areas.

The Minneapolis Schools

About 65,456 children go to school in Minneapolis. Most of them, about 57,715, attend one of the city's 98 public schools; 7,741 attend parochial or private schools.

The Minneapolis Public Schools, headed by Dr. John B. Davis, Jr., who became superintendent in 1967, consists of 67 elementary schools (kindergarten-6th grade), 15 junior high schools (grades 7-9), nine high schools (grades 10-12), two junior-senior high schools, and five special schools. Nearly 3,500 certificated personnel are employed.

Control of the public school system ultimately rests with a seven-member board which levies its own taxes and sells its own bonds. These non-salaried officials are elected by popular votes for staggered six-year terms. The superintendent is selected by the board and serves as its executive officer and professional adviser.

Almost 40 cents of each local property tax dollar goes to support a school system whose annual operating general fund budget in 1974-75 is $78,008,036 up from $75,493,430 in 1973-74. Minneapolis received federal funds totaling 11.4 million dollars in 1973-74 from many different federal aid programs. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act provided about 5.1 million dollars, of which 3.9 million dollars were from Title I funds. The adjusted maintenance cost per pupil unit in the system was $1,038 in 1972-73 while the range of per pupil unit costs in the state for districts maintaining elementary and secondary schools was from $548 to $1,316.

One of the superintendent's goals has been to achieve greater communication among the system's schools through decentralization. Initially, two "pyramids" or groups of geographically related schools were formed. First to be formed, in 1967, was the North Pyramid, consisting of North High School and the elementary and junior high schools which feed into it. In 1969 the South-Central Pyramid was formed around South and Central High Schools. Each pyramid had an area assistant superintendent as well as advisory groups of principals, teachers, and parents. The goals of the pyramid structure were to effect greater communication among schools and between schools and the community, to develop collaborative and cooperative programs, and to share particular facilities and competencies of teachers.

In the summer of 1973 decentralization was carried one step further when the entire school district, with the exception of five schools involved in an experimental program called Southeast Alternatives, was divided into three areas.

Each of these areas -- East, West and North -- is headed by a superintendent who has autonomous decision-making power within the guidelines of school district policies and philosophies.

Based on sight counts on October 16, 1973 the percentage of black American pupils for the school district was 11.7%. Nine years before, the percentage was 5.4%. American Indian children currently comprise 4.3% of the school population, more than double the proportion of nine years ago. The proportion of minority children in the various elementary schools generally reflects the prevailing housing pattern found in each school area. Although some non-white pupils are enrolled in every elementary school, non-white pupils are concentrated in two relatively small areas of the city. Of the 67 elementary schools, 12 have more than 30% non-white enrollment and seven of these have over 50%. There are no all-black nor all-white schools. Eighteen elementary schools have non-white enrollments of less than 5%.

The Minneapolis School Board has approved a desegregation plan involving busing which has operated smoothly since taking effect in September 1973.

The proportion of school age children in AFDC homes has more than doubled from approximately 12% in 1962 to 28% in 1972.

While the median pupil turnover rate for all the city schools in 1971-72 was about 24.5%, this figure varied widely according to location (turnover rate is the percentage of students that comes new to the school or leaves the school at some time during the school year, using the September enrollment as a base figure). Target Area schools generally experience a much higher turnover rate; in fact only four of the Target Area schools had turnover rates less than the city median. Compared with the city, the median for the Target Area schools was 36.1%.

The Target Area

The Target Area is a portion of the core city of Minneapolis where the schools are eligible to receive benefits from programs funded under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). A school is eligible to receive Title I aid if the percentage of families residing in that school's district which receives AFDC payments (in excess of $2,000 a year) -- or has an annual income under $2,000 -- exceeds the citywide percentage for families in those categories.

In 1972-73, nearly 26,871 children attended the 25 elementary schools, five junior highs, three senior highs and seven parochial schools that were eligible to receive this aid. One-third of these students were from minority groups and one-third were defined by the State Department of Education as

educationally disadvantaged, i.e. one or more grade levels behind in basic skills such as reading and arithmetic. Federal programs are concentrated on the educationally disadvantaged group.

According to 1970 census data, over 170,000 persons resided in the Target Area. Of that group, 11 percent were black and 3½ percent were Indian, more than double the citywide percentage of minority group members. Over half of the Target Area residents over 25 years old had not completed high school, compared to the 35 percent of the non-Target Area residents who did not have high school diplomas. One out of five Target Area residents over the age of 25 had gone to college, and nine percent had completed four or more years. One out of four of the non-Target Area residents had gone to college, and 15 percent had completed four or more years.

The income for an average Target Area family was $9,113 in 1970, about $2,000 less than the citywide average. The homes they lived in had an average value of $10,385, over 40 percent less than the average value of a single family residence in Minneapolis. One out of five Target Area children between the ages of 6 and 17 was a member of a family that was below the poverty level, while only 6 percent of the non-Target Area children had such a family status.

Historical Background

The Minneapolis Public Schools' Basic Skill Centers (BSC) have been operating since the summer of 1968. The BSC program was developed to help inner city students improve their reading skills. It provides for those Target Area students whose reading is most retarded.

There are two Basic Skill Centers; one on the near North Side, the other on the South Side. The Centers have been supported largely with local funds although most of the teaching aides have been paid with ESEA Title I funds. Each year from 600 to 700 students, the majority in grades four through six, have participated in the BSC program.

One major aspect of the original BSC operation was the extensive use of Talking Typewriters. From 1968 to 1970 each student spent 20 minutes a day using these computerized teaching machines and 20 minutes in an adjacent classroom where he received additional instruction from teachers and aides.

In 1970-71 the Centers' program -- hardware, software and students served -- was changed substantially. A multimedia room was developed in which students worked with tabletop Talking Pages, Language Masters, tachistoscopes, overhead projectors and, in some cases, with Dorset teaching machines. Students spent equal amounts of time in the multimedia room, on the Talking Typewriters and in the related classrooms, using two of these three facilities each day. New software for the Talking Typewriters and other teaching machines, and new support materials for the Centers' classrooms were developed by personnel from the Minneapolis Public Schools. Related materials for the home school classrooms, to be used on a volunteer basis, also were prepared. From 1970 on, only the children who were most severely retarded in reading, as determined by their teachers and by tests, participated in the program. Previously, intact classrooms from Target Area schools had attended the Centers.

A brief overview of past findings is included here. A more detailed history of the project and evaluations of previous years are available.[1]

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[1] Clark, S. P. Basic Skill Centers Evaluation, September 1969- June 1971. Minneapolis: Minneapolis Public Schools, 1971.

Clark, S. H. Basic Skill Centers of Minneapolis, 1971-72. Minneapolis: Minneapolis Public Schools, December 1972.

Clark, S. H. Basic Skill Centers of Minneapolis, 1972-73. Minneapolis: Minneapolis Public Schools, January 1974.

In 1968-69 and 1969-70 Stanford Primary Achievement Tests were used to measure the growth in reading of the students who attended the Centers and of comparison students from some of the same Target Area schools. The gains were not high for either group. The results on the vocabulary subtest were significantly (statistically) higher for the comparison students than for the Center students.

In 1970-71 many changes in the program were made. New student selection procedures were initiated, changes in the instructional program were begun, and the Gates-MacGinitie tests were used. Pre-post test results were obtained from 460 of the 701 students who received services from the Centers. Substantial gains were made on both reading comprehension and vocabulary tests. About seven out of ten children with complete test data made gains of one year or more in the six month pre-post test span.

In 1971-72 services were provided for 675 students. Two-thirds of the 501 students with complete test data made gains equal to or greater than expected for average children in the grade levels at which they were working. According to questionnaire responses, the Centers were viewed very favorably by parents, home school teachers, and the participating students.

In 1972-73 further curricular changes were made beginning in January, with the availability of additional materials from the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program. This program, which was being developed under the direction of the Centers' director, was structured around visual patterns in words. Development and production of the BSC program continued throughout the year but not enough materials were available to provide the complete course of instruction.

Individualized instruction was provided for 604 students in grades 4-9 from 23 schools. Seventy percent of the 384 students with complete test data made grade equivalent gains on Gates-MacGinitie Comprehension tests over those expected for the pre-post test span of six months. Two thirds of the pupils made such gains on the Stanford Word Study Skills tests.

Each year complete test data was lacking for about a third of the pupils. Many students in this group were on roll for less than six weeks which had been set as the minimum pre- to posttest time span. Other students moved out of the district or transferred to other schools without notice. Efforts were made, however, to test each child at the time of entrance in and exit from the program.

Objectives

Since late 1970 the general goals of this program have been:

1. To teach the most severely disabled readers and non-readers of grades 4 through 9 by the analytical-logical mode, that they might achieve functional literacy in two years or less.[2]
2. To design and develop an instructional program which, upon completion, would make possible the achievement of the first goal.

A measurable objective for this year was to raise the reading achievement of the pupils as measured by standardized tests. A gain of one and one-half months or more in grade equivalents for each month of attendance at the Centers by at least 50% of the students would be considered as attainment of that objective.

Project Operations

The North and South Basic Skill Centers continued to serve the most disabled readers from the participating schools, grades four through nine in this sixth year of the project's operation. Although the locations of the Centers remained the same through those years, changes occurred in the physical organization of the Centers due in large part to curricular changes.

Both Centers had a classroom, a multi-media room, and a laboratory. Each Center had 15 stations with TV-like three-button-response teaching machines used for the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program. Other teaching devices used in each lab included three Talking Typewriters and several Language Masters also used for the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program, developed by the present BSC staff. Attractively arranged free-reading corners offered a wide variety of paper-back books for those interested in browsing. All other reading materials were eliminated and only Basic Skill Centers Reading Program materials were used in instruction of the pupils at the Centers and the home schools.

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[2] The analytical-logical mode pertains to the cognitive learning style characteristic of the left hemisphere of the brain. For further description of the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program write: Mrs. Mary C. Kasbohm, Administrator, Basic Skill Centers of Minneapolis Public Schools, 2500 Park Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404.

Thirty pupils were scheduled for each 40 minute period. The students were bussed to and from their home-schools. The transfers ran so smoothly that the students were usually in their learning situations within two minutes after the arrival of the bus. The students on roll were scheduled to attend the Centers every school day. However, no pupils attended the Centers on Tuesday afternoon because of city-wide released time for professional planning and growth. Also, two schools dropped out of the program for about a month because of scheduling difficulties when the daylight savings program became effective in mid-January.

Personnel

The staff, both professional and paraprofessional, were well qualified to carry out their respective duties.

The two teachers at the South Center had worked in the project since it began. All four of the teachers were remedial reading specialists. They had all participated in developing and writing the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program under the supervision of the project administrator. Three teachers on leave joined the staff part-time as writers for the new sequences.

The daily administrative and mechanical problems of the project were handled by a teacher on special assignment who also demonstrated the use of newly developed BSC supplementary materials to teachers in the students' home schools.

The project administrator was also a reading specialist. She had initiated and supervised the development of the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program which provided all instructional materials used in 1973-74.

Twenty-eight teacher-aides worked with the students under supervision of the teachers in the classrooms, multi-media rooms, and in the labs. Many of the aides had been with the program since it began. They had all received special training in their work and had attended inservice sessions whenever new materials or methods were introduced. Some of their time was also spent in labeling, packaging and other mechanics of materials production.

Additional personnel were needed for the production of materials. A three-quarter time artist was added to the staff. One aide worked full-

time as a technician in the production of cassettes and related film-strips. A full-time duplicator operator was hired to run the off-set printer used for reproducing the many lessons and worksheets that were part of the program.

A clerk-typist at each of the Centers fulfilled the usual clerical requirements and assisted in the production of materials.

A consultant from the University of Minnesota assisted in the development of the placement and diagnostic mastery testing sequence.

No supplemental services were received from persons other than the staff listed above during the period covered by this report.

Planning and Training

The professional staff continued with the planning, development and try-out of later stages of the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program. Weekly meetings were held with the administrator on Tuesday released time, a time scheduled in all Minneapolis schools for faculty growth and development.

One full day of inservice training was conducted for the aides before school began to train them in the exclusive use of the new program.

Classroom teachers from the home schools were each brought to the Centers for a period to observe their pupils and become better acquainted with the reading program being used.

The Project Schools

Eighteen elementary and four junior high schools sent children to the Basic Skill Centers. Nine of the elementary and two of the junior high schools had been designated as Target Area Schools since 1965 when Title I ESEA funds first became available. The section on the Target Area, page 4, gives a description of the neighborhoods and backgrounds from which most of the students came.

The number of students sent to the Centers by each of the participating schools is given in Table 1. The evaluation group consists of

those students upon whom the evaluation was based. They are included in the section on results. The students with incomplete data were those who were lacking pre- and/or posttest scores.

Table 1

Number of Students by Participating School and Group 1973-74

School	Evaluation[a] Group	Students with Incomplete Data	Total Number
Bancroft	34	13	47
Bethune	12	14	26
Bremer	11	16	27
Calhoun	27	5	32
Clinton	21	14	35
Corcoran	23	16	39
Douglas	22	5	27
Harrison	17	13	30
Hawthorne	24	5	29
Holland	15	2	17
Irving	30	7	37
Lowell	20	6	26
Lyndale	26	14	40
Madison	12	3	15
Prescott	14	1	15
Putnam	11	4	15
Webster	3	0	3
Willard	21	7	28
Franklin	6	6	12
Jordan	12	9	21
Olson	21	11	32
Phillips	24	18	42
Totals	406	189	595

[a]Only students who had pre- and posttest scores were included in the evaluation group.

Student Participants

Almost two-thirds of the students who were enrolled, even briefly, at the Basic Skill Centers during the 1973-74 school year were in grades 4 and 5. Most of the junior high students were seventh graders. Table 2 gives the distribution by grade level for those in the evaluation group and for those with incomplete data.

Table 2

Distribution by Grade Level
of BSC Participants
1973-74

Grade Grade	Evaluation Group	Students with Incomplete Data	Total Number
3	4	11	15
4	167	63	230
5	103	42	145
6	69	30	99
7	42	25	67
8	16	14	30
9	5	4	9
Totals	406	189	595

The students were selected for the program by a dual screening. First, each participating school was asked to identify 40 of its lowest readers as possible BSC students. The Centers' teachers then gave each child The Basic Skill Centers Placement Test, a written group examination. Using the results of these tests, the 30 children from each school most in need of the program provided by the Centers were selected. In some cases two schools shared a period at a Center so the numbers of students from those schools were reduced. These examinations were also used to place the children at the appropriate levels in the program.

Nearly 60% of all the students who enrolled in the Centers were boys. Of those who were placed in the introductory or lower levels of the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program 26% had not attended the Centers before 1973-74. However, 45% of those who placed at the intermediate or higher

levels of the program had previous BSC experience. This was due, in part, to the fact that those who had not completed the program the year before were encouraged to return.

The attendance rate, determined by dividing the average number of days present by the average number of days on roll was 82% for those with complete test data and 73% for those with incomplete data. These figures may be compared with the attendance rate of over 90% for Minneapolis schools in general.

Table 3, which gives the reasons why students in different groups left the Centers, shows that 90% of the students with complete test data left the Center either because of the end of the school year or because they had completed the course. About half of those with incomplete data left because of parent, teacher, or school request or because they moved or transferred. Students who transferred from one participating school to another usually remained in the program.

The B Group students were those tested with Level B of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Test because their BSC placement test had shown them to be in need of the introductory or lower levels of the program. The C Group students entered at a higher level and were tested with the Gates C level. As may be seen from Table 3, a higher proportion of the C Group than of the B Group left the program because they had finished the course available at the Centers.

Parent and Community Involvement

Each of the Centers held an open house in the fall to which all of the parents and many community leaders and other interested persons were invited. The turn-out for these events was good in terms of the usual parent involvement in the PTA's of the participating schools.

Table 3

Reasons Students Left the Centers
1973-74

	Evaluation Group							
	Students in B Group[a]		Students in C Group[a]		Students with Incomplete Data		All Students	
Reason	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
End of School Year	179	85	101	52	50	26	330	56
Finished Course Before End of Session	12	6	74	38	5	3	91	15
Parent, Teacher or School Request	11	5	9	5	41	22	61	10
Moved or Transferred	2	1	8	4	51	27	61	10
Assigned to Special Class	0	0	1	b	13	7	14	3
Discipline on Bus	1	b	0	0	15	8	16	3
Poor Attendance	0	0	0	0	8	4	8	1
Pretested Too High	0	0	0	0	1	b	1	b
Not Available	6	3	2	1	5	3	13	2
Total	211	100%	195	100%	189	100%	595	100%

[a]Indicates Gates-MacGinitie test level

[b]Less than 1%

Dissemination and Communication

The newly developed Basic Skill Centers Reading Program received attention on both the local and national levels. The School Bulletin, Minneapolis Public Schools, printed a full page illustrated article about the program on April 19, 1974. A slide show which included sample frames of the program was developed. It was presented several times in Minneapolis to interested groups. An expanded version of that presentation was presented by the director and two teachers at the national meeting of the International Reading Association in New Orleans in April 1974, where much interest was expressed in the program.

Communication between the Centers and the schools continued to receive emphasis. At the beginning of the school year, charts showing the entry level of each of their students were sent to all participating home school teachers and principals. These charts were up-dated every two weeks to provide information on the progress of the individual students.

In addition, arrangements were made so that the home school classroom teachers who sent pupils to BSC could accompany their students to observe not only the program but also their students' performance and reactions. Each teacher made one visit.

A large variety of followup materials developed at the Centers was distributed to the home schools to be used for individual reinforcement at the different levels at which the children were working at the BSC. As new supplements were developed and delivered to the schools the Center staff explained their use.

Budget

Title I funds of $136,248 were allocated to the Basic Skill Centers for 1973-74. The cost per pupil of Title I funds was $229. These funds were used for salaries of teacher aides, primarily, and inservice sessions for the students' home school teachers. The Title I money covered 43% of the total costs of the program. Local funds of $180,019 provided for the rest of the project which included development of the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program.

Student Measures

The Comprehension section of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was used for pre- and posttesting. Primary B (designed for second grade) was used for those who had placed at the introductory levels in the BSC program. Level C (designed for third grade) was used for those who had placed at higher levels. These were not the tests designated for the grade levels in which the children were enrolled at their home schools but they more nearly matched the actual reading levels of the students who, on city-wide testing, were shown to be one or more years below grade level in reading. Students who scored within two grade equivalents of the top (5.4) of the B test were retested with the C level. They were often students who had been placed at the lower levels of the program for remediation of specific problems rather than for the entire introductory series.

According to the publisher of the Gates-MacGinitie:

> The Comprehension test measures the child's ability to read and understand whole sentences and paragraphs. This ability includes many skills not involved in the mere ability to recognize words. The child must grasp the total thought if he is to answer correctly.

Although children entered and left the program at various times during the year, efforts were made to ensure that they received both pre- and posttests. Students who left the program after less than six weeks of enrollment were not posttested.

Results

Results are given here for three different groups: the B group of students who had pre- and posttesting with the Gates-MacGinitie B level comprehension test, the C group who had similar testing with the C level Gates, and a third group of students who scored so low on the B pretest that no grade equivalents were available from which to calculate gain scores.

The students in the B group (N=190) were almost all (97%) elementary students. A quarter of them had attended the BSC at some time previous to their enrollment in 1973-74. This group exceeded not only the objectives set by Title I but also the more difficult objective set by the director of the project. Title I objectives in 1973-74 were that 25% of the students achieve at least 1.4 months for each month in the project

and that 50% gain at least one month for each month in the project. The B group students were on roll for 7 months so a gain of 1.4 for each month would equal about one year's growth. This objective was met or surpassed by 71% (Table 4) rather than 25% of the B group, while 81% gained at least one G.E. month for each month at the Centers. The director's objective was also surpassed in that 69% of the B level students gained at least a month and a half for each month in the program.

The gains made by the C group (N=195) were even more substantial. The C level students were, on the average, a year older than the B group. Only 61% of them were from elementary schools and 45% of them had attended the Centers before the 1973-74 school year. A gain of 8 months in their average enrollment of 6 months would equal a gain of 1.4 months for each month in the program. This gain, or better, was shown by 86% of the C group while 92% gained at least a month for a month in the project. The directors' objective was also more then met in that 82% of the group made gains of at least a month and a half for each month on roll (Table 5).

Twenty-one students scored so low on the B pretest that no grade equivalents were available. Their mean raw score was 1.33 with a range of 0-4. The G.E. for a raw score of 5 is 1.2. However, on the posttest, given after an average of 7 months on roll, their mean raw score was 16.6 with a G.E. of 2.3. They had clearly made gains of at least one year.

Since 1973-74 was the first year in which all curricular materials were provided by the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program a comparison was made of gains this year with those in the two previous years (Table 6). The rate of gain was calculated by dividing the median G.E. gain by the mean number of days on roll converted to tenths of a school year. Although the gains in 1971-72 and 1972-73 were good, 1973-74 gains were outstanding. In each of those three years about a third of the students had incomplete test data. The reasons for the lack of data and the reasons why the students left the program were approximately the same each year.

Table 4

Grade Equivalent Gains Distribution
Gates-MacGinitie, Comprehension
Level B
1973-74

Grade Equivalent Gains	N	%	Cum. %
+3.0 or more	14	7	7
+2.5 to +2.9	23	12	19
+2.0 to +2.4	37	19	38
+1.9	7	4	42
+1.8	5	3	45
+1.7	5	3	48
+1.6	6	3	51
+1.5	10	5	56
+1.4	8	4	60
+1.3	6	3	63
+1.2	9	5	68
+1.1	2	1	69
+1.0	3	2	71
+.9	8	4	75
+.8	3	2	77
+.7	7	4	81
+.6	8	4	85
+.5	6	3	88
+.4	5	3	91
+.3	6	3	94
+.2	4	2	96
+.1	2	1	97
No Gain	6	3	100
Total	190	100%	

Median G.E. gain: 1.6 (calculated from ungrouped data)

Mean time on roll: 129 days or .72 school year

81% of the students gained 7 or more months in the average of 7 months on roll.

Table 5

Grade Equivalent Gains Distribution
Gates-MacGinitie, Comprehension
Level C
1973-74

Grade Equivalent Gains	N	%	Cum. %
+3.0 or more	28	14	14
+2.5 to +2.9	24	12	26
+2.0 to +2.4	29	15	41
+1.9	8	4	45
+1.8	8	4	49
+1.7	8	4	53
+1.6	4	2	55
+1.5	5	2	57
+1.4	11	6	63
+1.3	5	2	65
+1.2	7	4	69
+1.1	12	6	75
+1.0	8	4	79
+.9	6	3	82
+.8	7	4	86
+.7	3	2	88
+.6	7	4	92
+.5	4	2	94
+.4	3	2	96
+.3	1	a	96
+.2	3	2	98
+.1	0	0	98
No Gain	4	2	100
Total	195	100%	

[a]Less than 1%

Median G.E. gain: 1.7 (calculated from ungrouped data)

Mean time on roll: 106 days or .59 school year

92% of the students gained 6 or more months in the average of 6 months on roll.

Table 6

Comparison of Gains for Three Years
Gates-MacGinitie Comprehension

Year	Gates Test Level	N	Mean No.of Days on Roll	Tenths of School Year	Median G.E. Gain	Rate of Gain
1971-72	B	346	130.96	.73	1.01	1.38
	C	155	117.45	.65	1.06	1.63
1972-73	B	273	138.02	.77	1.00	1.30
	C	108	124.81	.69	1.00	1.45
1973-74	B	190	129.26	.72	1.58	2.19
	C	195	106.47	.59	1.74	2.95

Discussion

The Basic Skill Centers project continued to achieve, even surpass, the objectives which were set for it by Title I and by its present director in terms of standardized tests.

Gain scores on standardized tests are always difficult to interpret. This is especially true when instructional level, rather than grade level, testing is used. Instructional level testing has been used at the Centers because it was more appropriate for measuring the growth in achievement of the students attending the Centers. Students were selected for the program because they were one or more years below grade level in reading at their home schools.

Two observations using these scores may be made. First, the gains shown by the students this year are so large for the amount of time spent in the program that even if they were half as great they would still be outstanding for students who had been getting further behind in reading each year. Second, the comparison made of the 1973-74 gains with those of the two previous years using the same tests and type of data analysis suggest that the implementation of the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program has greatly improved the effectiveness of an already effective project.

Questions arise concerning the use of the Gates-MacGinitie or any norm-referenced test for measuring the attainment of goals in a project such as the BSC which has as an objective "functional literacy." If specific behavioral objectives were made, criterion-referenced tests developed in terms of those objectives, and acceptable levels of performance determined, then mastery of the basic skills of reading (functional literacy) rather than the time spent in learning them (grade equivalent gains) would be assessed.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the assumption that federal or other funds will again be available to provide the paraprofessionals needed for implementation of this program. The Basic Skill Centers project differs from other reading projects in the Minneapolis schools in that it serves the most severely disabled readers in grades four to nine in Title I schools with an individualized program designed to enable them to return to reading classes in their home schools upon completion of the program.

No attempt was made, in this evaluation, to compare the BSC approach with other reading programs. Taking these facts into consideration, the following recommendations are given:

1. Continue the program at the Basic Skill Centers since the year's results showed it to be highly effective in meeting its objectives.
2. Continue the use of the Basic Skill Centers Reading Program since gains have been greater than in the earlier years of the project before such materials were added to the program.
3. Continue to provide feedback to and encourage close relationships with the participating schools. This procedure facilitates the use of the follow-up materials for reinforcing the children's newly learned skills.
4. Continue the same procedures used for selecting BSC students. The double screening gives the participating schools a voice in the process and allows the Centers' teachers to identify those students who might most benefit from the program.
5. Conduct a follow-up study of the 1973-74 Basic Skill Center students to see how they compare with their peers. Differentiation should be made between those who completed the BSC program as it existed in 1973-74 and those who did not finish the course.
6. Define specific objectives for the BSC project in terms of functional literacy and develop criterion-referenced tests of those objectives so that the progress of the students toward the achievement of those goals may be more clearly assessed.